

Rubio hosts Quad meeting with Japan, India and Australia, directed against China

Oscar Grenfell
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In his first act as the Trump administration's secretary of state, Marco Rubio convened a meeting of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a de facto alliance of the US, Japan, India, and Australia, and then met one-on-one with the foreign ministers of those countries.

Bringing together the Quad as Rubio's first order of business was an unmistakable signal. The message was that deepening an all-sided confrontation with China, viewed as the chief threat to American imperialist dominance, would be at the centre of the fascist administration's foreign policy.

The meeting was unusual from several standpoints. Usually, foreign ministers are not present at US presidential inaugurations, but Trump broke with protocol and invited several, including those of the Quad.

Upon assuming office, the secretary of state has often met first with North American counterparts from Canada and Mexico before broadening the scope of their engagements. But those countries are in the crosshairs of Trump's "America First" rampage. The fascist leader has threatened massive tariffs on Canada and even its conquest by the US and declared, upon assuming office, that the Gulf of Mexico was now the "Gulf of America."

With Trump going on the offensive against those countries as part of his plans to establish a "Fortress North America" and threatening massive trade war measures against Europe, the Quad countries are being primed as the new administration's central strategic and geopolitical partners.

The international press noted that this is, above all, targeted against China, with headlines such as "Quad foreign ministers meet in Washington in signal of Trump's China focus" and "China hawk Rubio kicks off Trump's foreign policy with Indo-Pacific 'Quad' meeting."

Rubio and the three foreign ministers issued a brief statement. It declared their "shared commitment to strengthening a Free and Open Indo-Pacific where the rule of law, democratic values, sovereignty, and territorial integrity are upheld and defended."

Such rhetoric, employed by successive US administrations to justify an anti-China build-up in the Indo-Pacific, has always been shot through with hypocrisy, given American imperialism's record of criminal invasions, aggressive wars

and coups.

But it is transparently absurd for the Trump administration to talk about "sovereignty" and "territorial integrity" in the Indo-Pacific, while its commander-in-chief speaks about seizing Canada, the Panama Canal and Greenland, for undisguised motives of imperial expansion.

After another sentence about the importance of "international law," "peace" and "stability," the statement asserted, "We also strongly oppose any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion."

These are the talking points used by the previous Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations to escalate tensions.

A "free and open Indo-Pacific" is code for the region being open to the US and its allies to freely conduct whatever military and diplomatic provocations that they wish against Beijing, while undertaking a massive military build-up. And "force" or "coercion" means any measures used by China that cut across the interests of US imperialism.

Rubio's decision to convene a meeting of the Quad, rather than simply hold bilateral meetings with the foreign ministers of its member states, pointed to the Trump administration's plans for a coordinated and full-scale military confrontation with China. Beijing has always been intensely hostile to the Quad, because it brings together the four largest militaries in the region, against China.

The Quad was established by the Bush administration in 2007, with its formation paralleled by massive Exercise Malabar military exercises. At the time, the Quad was widely recognised as a response by the US to China's growing economic and strategic influence.

But the institution floundered shortly after its establishment, because of vacillations among the non-US members. While fully committed to their respective bilateral alliances with the US, they were fearful of the clear implication of military confrontation with China, a major trading partner of Indo-Pacific states, embodied in the Quad.

The institution was revived under the first Trump administration in 2017, as part of its stepped-up aggression towards China. Over recent years, while the Quad has held regular meetings, there have been complaints in US military-strategic and aligned circles, that its gatherings have not been

frequent enough, and have led to few concrete actions.

In a clear signal that such concerns would be allayed, the Rubio-convened gathering pledged to “meet together on a regular basis as we prepare for the next Quad Leaders’ Summit hosted by India.”

Following the Quad gathering, Rubio and National Security Advisor Mike Waltz met with each of the foreign ministers.

Significantly, the meeting with India’s External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was first.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has dispensed with the vestiges of its previous “non-aligned” foreign policy and become a full-fledged partner in the US confrontation with China. This has included expanding joint military exercises, seeking to align other South Asian nations with the US war drive, and ratcheting up its own border disputes with China.

Because of its size and position, India would be crucial to any military conflict with Beijing. It has also become the fifth-largest economy in the world by nominal gross domestic product and has a population comparable to that of China.

In a summary of the discussion, Jaishankar stated that it had focussed “particularly on critical and emerging technologies, defence cooperation, energy, and on advancing a free and open Indo-Pacific region.” Critical technologies, including the dominance of AI, are central to the US confrontation with China.

Japanese Foreign Minister Iwaya Takeshi said that his conversation with Rubio included a discussion of Japan’s ongoing military expansion. The country’s budget for 2025 earmarks a record 8.7 trillion yen (\$US55.3 billion) for the military, in the 13th consecutive expansion of annual defence spending. This is part of the wholesale repudiation and violation of the pacifist clause of the country’s post-World War II constitution.

The summary of their discussion was more explicit than the Quad statement, declaring that they had spoken of the need “to counter ongoing threats in the Indo-Pacific and around the world, including joint efforts against China’s destabilizing actions. The two also discussed concerns over both North Korea’s (DPRK) political and security alignment with Russia, as well as China’s support for Russia’s defense industrial base.”

China was explicitly identified as a target. Significantly, the summary pointed to the interlinked nature of Washington’s confrontation with China and its US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

With Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, Rubio “discussed efforts to continue security cooperation through AUKUS and bilateral defense initiatives, and to enhance our partnership on critical minerals and global supply chain security.”

The question of dominance over the production and processing of critical minerals, which are key to military and high-tech products, is another element of the US drive against

China. Australia has vast deposits, and the Biden administration struck far-reaching agreements, including enabling US government investment in the Australian critical minerals sector.

In the lead-up to Trump’s inauguration, fears were voiced in security circles in the US and Australia over the new administration’s attitude to AUKUS. It is a key cockpit of war planning and preparation, bringing together the US, the UK and Australia.

Under AUKUS, Australia is slated to acquire nuclear-powered submarines from the US. That is part of a broader build-up under the Labor government and the Biden administration, which included a vast expansion of US basing arrangements throughout the north and west of the continent and the stationing there of major US strike capabilities.

Rubio’s endorsement of AUKUS was hailed by anti-China hawks within Australia, while Wong, whose government has focussed above all on the militarisation of the continent, was grinning ear to ear in her photos with the new secretary of state.

In a call to Philippine President Bongbong Marcos yesterday, Rubio pledged “ironclad” commitment to Manila’s security, and denounced China’s “dangerous and destabilizing actions in the South China Sea.” In reality, the US has stoked longstanding territorial disputes over the sea, transforming them over the past decade from simmering differences to a potential flashpoint for war.

That has been taken to a new level under the Marcos administration, which last year oversaw armed clashes with Chinese forces in the sea that could have sparked an all-out war.

Rubio’s opening days as secretary of state confirm that Trump has received the backing of the dominant sections of the US ruling elite, to pursue longstanding policies aimed at reversing the protracted decline of American imperialism. That will centrally include raising to even greater heights the war preparations against China, which have been a feature of every US administration since 2011.



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